
The Practical Horticulturist - Apply for PFI's produce safety cost-share + Hear from Ben Hartman at our annual conference

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Equipping farmers to build resilient farms and communities.



Meet a CoHort: Michael and Deb Carter

Michael and Deb Carter own Hidden Acres Farm in Coon Rapids, Iowa, where they grow diverse vegetables and cut flowers that they sell at four weekly farmers markets.

Why do you grow hort crops, in five or fewer words: We love working with our hands.

What is something you're excited about this year: We always get excited about trying to anticipate the needs of our customers and growing what they want to buy. We put so much work into what we grow that we want to be able to sell all of it and understanding what customers want helps us sell more. Even packaging crops differently – like putting cucumbers in baskets for pickling instead of selling them individually – can get more of them sold at the market. It's fun.

What is one thing you would change about your industry: We are interested in letting people – especially the younger generations – know that you can make a living and have a fulfilling life on a farm doing something other than corn and soybeans. We want to mentor folks and help them succeed. Also, having canneries back in the state to have a market and a way of preserving the harvest would make a huge difference.

Favorite PFI memory: Meeting **Jan Libbey**. We went to a field day on her farm and saw how she set up her wash-pack area. It was simple, but we learned so much from it. It was so positive and made it seem possible.

Your favorite crop and why: It's cucumbers. We had such a huge crop this year that we laughed about it.

"PFI members share their knowledge openly, and we have learned so much from them. We've had some great mentors." - Michael Carter

PROGRAM UPDATES

Apply today: PFI's produce safety cost-share is open



PFI offers a cost-share program for specialty crop farmers seeking to make on-farm food safety improvements. Participants must spend at least \$2,200 on improvements and will receive a \$2,000 reimbursement.

Improvements include installing a cooler or CoolBot system, enclosing a packing area, purchasing protective fencing and more. **Apply today.**

Ben Hartman, author of "The Lean Farm," will lead sessions at the PFI conference



Since our founding, the annual conference has been a keystone event for sharing knowledge, building connections and celebrating agriculture in Iowa.

This year, **Ben Hartman**, author of "The Lean Farm" and farmer at Clay Bottom Farm in Goshen, Indiana, will present three sessions at the 2025 Annual Conference.

[Learn more about Ben, and other speakers and their sessions, on our website.](#)

IN THE FIELD

Build your produce safety knowledge



Dates for Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training from the ISU Extension & Outreach Safe Produce Program are now available. This training equips farmers with the knowledge and skills to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule and is **[an eligibility requirement for PFI's produce safety cost-share.](#)** Two remote trainings and two in-person trainings are scheduled.

[See available dates and learn more.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the date for PFI's commercial apple growers workshop



Tuesday, Jan. 28, 2025 | Cumming, IA

PFI's commercial apple growers workshop will take place on Jan. 28, 2025, at Wilson's Orchard & Farm in Cumming, Iowa. This workshop offers opportunities to connect with growers, learn how to address challenges and hone skills.

Registration opens in early December.

Friends of PFI events

Local food policy summit in Ames

Friday, Dec. 6 | Noon-3:30 p.m. | Ames, IA

Host: Iowa Food System Coalition

The Iowa Food System Coalition is hosting a high-level overview of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's current local food programs and provides a chance for legislators to share their priorities for local and regional food systems. This free event includes lunch and is part of the Iowa Farmers Union Convention.

Learn more and register.



Dec. 3: Conference – Iowa Organic Association's Annual Meeting

Hosted by: Iowa Organic Association
2-7:30 p.m. | Story City, IA

Dec. 7-8: Workshop – New Farmer U

Hosted by: Marbleseed

Dec. 6-7: Convention – Iowa Farmers Union Convention

Hosted by: Iowa Farmers Union
All day | Ames, IA

Dec. 10-12: Conference – Great Lakes Expo

All day | St. Croix, MN

*Hosted by Michigan State
Horticultural Society, MSU Extension
and Michigan Vegetable Council*
All day | Grand Rapids, MI

View our events calendar

Contact our team

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